

THE BHAGVAD GITA AND MAHATMA GANDHI A PRESENT SCENARIO

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ABSTRACT

The Bhagavad-Gita or the sacred song is a Hindu poem with spirituality, divinity and deep philosophy embodied in it. Mahatma Gandhi has often acknowledged its profound effect on his life. Gandhiji was captivated throughout his life by Gita's message. Gandhiji interpreted that the essence or quintessence of the entire work of Gita message was action without expectation of fruit (anasaktiyoga). In his own words, the Bhagavad Gita is designed for the common man. In present era Gita's message and Gandhiji's concept of real happiness proves again that mere material gains never bring peace within us. Self realization or liberation may be the goal of Hindu philosophy. Renunciation of all desire of action was ultimate message. In the present paper we will throw light on the importance of prayers, the Bhagavad-Gita and its teachings on Mahatma Gandhi's life and his writings.

KEYWORDS: Bhagavad, Gita, Dharma, Renunciation, Self Realization, Purification, Ascetic, Conscience, Allegory, Crystallization, Incarnation

INTRODUCTION

Gandhiji's first introduction to Gita was in England and through two English brothers. Gandhi at that time was studying law. The brothers read Gita regularly and asked Gandhi to join in. Because of his lack of Sanskrit knowledge, he read English version by Sir Edwin Arnold and was captivated throughout his life by Gita's message. He specially liked the concept of Dharma that was summarized in last nineteen verses of the chapter II. During his imprisonment years, he studied the book in detail. Gandhiji interpreted that the essence of the entire work of Gita message was action without expectation of fruit (anasaktiyoga). Real dharma according to Bapu was self-less action. The Bhagavad Gita is perhaps the greatest work of practical Indian philosophy among the various interpretations of the Bhagavad Gita, the one by Mahatma Gandhi holds a unique position. In his own words, the Bhagavad Gita is designed for the common man.

Gandhiji felt that the Mahabharata war in this great book was only a pretext. It was an allegory. In fact it represented a battle going on, within every individual. Mahabharata war might not be historical as it exists today. Even winning the war did not bring happiness. Along with tremendous losses, it brought only regret and remorse to all. Likewise in the present context day-by-day increasing family disputes for land, wealth, separation, dissolution of joint family into nuclear or solitary family, destruction, crime, forgery, corruption, selfishness, lust for attaining materialistic things, leisure and pleasure never bring real peace and happiness. In present era Gita's message and Gandhiji's concept of real happiness proves again that mere materialistic gains never bring peace within us. Self realization or liberation may be the goal of Hindu philosophy. Renunciation of all desire of action was ultimate message. This is the center around which the Gita is woven. This renunciation is the central sun, around which devotion, knowledge and the rest revolve like planets. Thus, Man's highest duty in life is to serve mankind and take his share in bettering its condition.

Prayer is the only means of bringing about orderliness and peace and repose in our daily acts. Prayer is a confession of one's unworthiness and weakness. There is an eternal struggle raging in man's breast between the powers of darkness and of light, and he who has not the sheet-anchor of prayer to rely upon will be a victim to the powers of darkness.

Om

Firm Faith

strengthens the Will;

Sincere Prayer

develops Devotion;

Soulful Meditation

awakens Intuition; and

Perfect Dedication

attracts Grace

Gandhi practiced collective prayers of universal significance and it includes verses from the second chapter of the Bhagvad Gita which called for as ascetic self- resistant , self -control and non- violence. His life teachings and principles have a reflection of the national epics the Ramayan and the Bhagvad Gita . In India he is called the father of the nation and his birthday 2nd October is commemorated worldwide as the international day of non violence.

Prayer brings peace, strength and consolation that nothing else can give. But it must be offered from the heart. When it is not offered from the heart, it is like the beating of a drum, or just the vocal effect of the throat sounds. When it is offered from the heart, it has the power to melt mountains of misery. God can never be realized by one who is not pure of heart. Self-purification, therefore, must mean purification in all the walks of life. And purification being highly infectious, purification of oneself necessarily leads to the purification of one's surroundings. Self-purification is like crystallization of any crude /impure compound which after crystallization is converted into a definite shape and possess shining crystals and as a pinch of such kind of pure crystals causes purification of other compound called as seedling. Real prayer is an absolute shield and protection against . . . evils. .

God has thousand names, or rather, He is Nameless. We worship or pray to Him by which ever name that pleases us. Some call Him Rama, some Krishna, others call Him Rahim, and yet others call Him God. All worship the same spirit. The religious belief, Gandhi held is common to all particular religions. According to him "The soul of religion is one "but it is encased in a multitude of form. Religion is not for separating people but to bind them. The scripture of all religion teaches the same fundamental message of Satya and Ahimsa and provides the horizontal place for everyone. Man is considered 'a grain of sand' in nature and in society his significance is recognized when he works with each other in a peaceful and harmonious manner. Just like various elements placed in periodic table do not have their individual existence. Their real significance lies in combining with each other and giving different new, important and useful compounds.

Gandhi had a dream of a society which was based on the principles of Swaraj non violent democracy. For him Swaraj was Moksha and is therefore the result of self control which is the truest Swaraj and Dharma mean selfless service of others i.e. in modern world we celebrate as " joy of giving". Gandhi's ideal man was a worker whose hard work improved the quality of everyday life. In his views the only path that leads both to earthly and spiritual bliss is Ahimsa and Satya.. His idea of non-violence is hard to accept in the context of modern fast-growing world but the result is more eternal.

He says," May this Pathway to God inspire young men throughout the world to lead the Life of Light practiced and preached by Gandhiji, so that our "Light of India" might soon become the "Light of the World"." Our earthly existence

is," according to Gandhiji, "so fickle that it can be wiped. Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment. Full effort is full victory. All embodied life is in reality an incarnation of God, but it is not usual to consider every living being an incarnation. There is an Urdu saying which means "Adam is not God but he is a spark of the Divine." And therefore he who is the most religiously behaved has most of the divine spark in him.

God
reveals Himself Everyday
to
All Human Beings.
but
Unfortunately
We Shut Our Minds
to
The Feeling of His Presence;
We Shut Our Eyes
to
His Inner Light;
and
We Shut Our Ears
to
His Inner Voice.

Gandhi's Gita is also a call to detached service, a 'gospel of selfless action'. In order to achieve true liberation, it is important to control all mental desires and tendencies to enjoy sense pleasures. The following verses illustrate this:

When a man dwells in his mind on the object of sense, attachment to them is produced. From attachment springs desire and from desire come anger. From anger arises bewilderment, from bewilderment loss of memory; and from loss of memory, the destruction of intelligence and from the destruction of intelligence he perishes. (2.62-3)

Gandhi dedicated his life to the wider purpose of discovery Truth or Satya . He tried to achieve this by learning from his own mistake and conducting experiments on himself. As we are surviving in an environment of violence- culture, religious fundamentalism and fanaticism. We should also try to find out our mistake and must learn from them. Man should be a follower of his conscience only than a movement towards violence or untruth could be deprived. In Gandhi's words "To me God is truth and love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness; God is the source of light and yet He is above and beyond all these. "God is conscience". This expression strongly expresses his indomitable faith in the living God who provides everything in the universe.

According to Gandhi. "I find a solace in the Bhagavad-Gita that I miss even in the Sermon on the Mount. When disappointment stares me in the face and all alone I see not one ray of light, I go back to the Bhagavad-Gita. I find a verse

here and a verse there, and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming tragedies -- and my life has been full of external tragedies -- and if they have left no visible or indelible scar on me, I owe it all to the teaching of Bhagavad-Gita."

CONCLUSIONS

Thus we can summarize very well from the Bhagvad Gita's message and Mahatma Gandhi's life teachings that prayer with self purification of one's heart and recitation of only one verse from Gita in our daily routine prayer must be an essential part in every family. Its divine grace always protects us from evils and calamities. It is a very powerful remedy for today's man every problems. It is, in the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson,

'an empire of thought' that everyone can benefit from, regardless of religion, beliefs or background

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